



Watertown Town Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2015 AT 7:00 PM

RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO COUNCIL CHAMBER ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

In accordance with the provisions of Rule 2.6 of the Rules of the Town Council, and pursuant to the Call of the Council President, the members of the Town Council of the City known as the Town of Watertown are hereby notified of a Special Meeting of the Town Council to be held on Monday, June 8, 2015 at 7:00 pm, in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber, Administration Building.

ELECTED OFFICIALS:

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Stephen P. Corbett,
Vice President

Aaron Dushku,
Councilor At Large

Susan G. Falkoff,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Angeline B. Kounelis,
District A Councilor

Cecilia Lenk,
District B Councilor

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
District C Councilor

Kenneth M. Woodland
District D Councilor

MINUTES

1. **ROLL CALL:** A Special Town Council meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber, Administration Building. Present for the meeting were Councilors Aaron Dushku, Angeline B. Kounelis, Cecilia Lenk, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., Kenneth M. Woodland, Vice President Stephen P. Corbett and Council President Mark S. Sideris. Councilors Falkoff and Palomba arrived shortly after the call of the roll. Also present were Town Manager Michael J. Driscoll and Attorney Brian Riley. The Council Clerk was absent.

2. **CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC HEARING AND VOTE:** On an [Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance](#) as follows:

Arsenal Overlay Development District (AODD) Text Amendment

The Athena Arsenal LLC requests an amendment to the Arsenal Overlay Development District (AODD) of the Watertown Zoning Ordinance. The requested amendments allow for the creation of a master plan to create a vibrant campus for Athenahealth, Inc. as well as the resident of Watertown by amending Section 5.12. The amendments would modify the retail categories to allow limited retail uses consistent with the Campus Special Permit, increase height for new construction, require parking consistent with Article VI and clarify the permit process for the AODD. The amendment would also incorporate amendments made by the Watertown Arsenal Development Corporation at the time the site was first redeveloped and make ministerial changes.

The Chair recognized Steve Magoon, Community Development and Planning Director, who provided background to tonight's zoning amendment.

The Chair recognized Mr. Larry Beals of Beals Associates who provided an overview of the proposed amendments on behalf of Athenahealth.

The Chair opened up the meeting to Councilors for comments/questions:

Councilor Kounelis stated that residents that have contacted her are concerned that there is overflow parking on School Street because of not enough parking on the existing campus and asked why eliminate parking on the east side and put all the focus on the west side. She noted that Mr. David Gamble had commented in 2010 that there should be parking in the middle of the campus and not on either of the far ends. Councilor Kounelis indicated that she has major concerns.

Councilor Lenk stated that this proposal moves a big building really close to the river which she does not like and asked why not propose a higher building more central to the campus and not amass buildings that block the historic smoke stack.

The Chair opened up the hearing to the public and recognized:

1. Tom Vasquez, Charles River Road – stated that he is in full support of Athenahealth's proposal noting that everything he sees will be good for Watertown.
2. Will Vandinter, 29 Paul Street – stated that he has some concerns over the development noting that it is basically giving them a card blanche for any development. He also noted a lack of traffic studies.
3. Joe Levendusky, Templeton Parkway – point of the campus that is closest to the river is unacceptable as there is a lack of setback there. Want a firm commitment from Athena in pressing agencies on the transportation issue to avoid huge problems later on if it is not solved.
4. Kathy Santorum, North Beacon Street – stated that not all the abutting neighbors are in agreement with this proposal. She spoke in concern over the massing of buildings that are going to cut off the whole south side neighborhood from the community. She asked who will make sure lighting – traffic – pollution – heavy construction activities will not adversely affect the abutters. She asked that the process be slowed down and no vote be taken tonight.
5. Jonathan Bockian, Irving/Charles River Road - stated that focusing on the East end annexed building to the garage - there are certain things that should never be in the master plan such as – how high buildings should be at that location; how close to the road and square footage.
6. Sarah Ryan, Paul Street – she stated that the redesigned parking garage is a positive thing; however she noted that she still feels too much uncertainty and would like to see a real master plan – putting time in at the front end will save so much time. She lastly noted 2 more concerns: any large obstruction that might sit over by the river and squeezing in an office building next to the fence is not nice.

7. Patty Vandinter, Paul Street – stated that she has a lot of issues with the redesign. She noted that she does not want to look at a 10 story garage and that the town should not give them card blanche.
8. Edodia Thomas, 67 Marion Road – read a list of concerns. She stated that the plans keep shifting and it needs better structure.
9. Dave Martin, 229 North Beacon Street – He stated that Athena radically improved the layout and the plans have come a long way. He stated his support for the plan for the new west end garage but does not support the changes to the AODD zoning overlay until a full master plan is presented by Athena.
10. Barbara Rushkin, Spring Street – she asked Mr. Magoon to explain the relationship between the amendments and the master plan. Mr. Magoon stated that the map or drawing is not what is before the Council for approval tonight; the zoning is. He stated that there is no process for a master plan tonight; what is proposed in the amendment to create a process for a master plan within the AODD.
11. Morena Sullivan, Franklin Street – asked: why is a whole section proposed to be cleared of large trees noting that the beautiful scenic drive is being eroded. She stated that she would like a scenic road designation before any trees are cut down.
12. Gary Shaw, Russell Avenue – he asked the Council to request from Athena and their consultants, visualizations and asked Mr. Magoon if the traffic piece was going to happen during the master plan process noting the entrance exit of the garages. Mr. Magoon stated, yes.
13. David Jay, Charles River Road – he stated that what he sees here is very imposing office buildings with all the historic character lost behind it. Not clear how the bike paths connect.
14. Megan O’Halloran, Belmont Chamber of Commerce – she stated that it would be very beneficial to allow Athena to move forward with their plan as they have been very transparent and responsive.
15. Julie Vallentine, Palmer Street – asked: what is the plan to accommodate employee parking during the construction process.
16. Ernesta K, Riverside Street – she stated that she is has always been very disturbed by the amount of paving covering the entire site and excited about having it removed. She stated that Athena has shown good will and good faith in working steadily with the neighborhood people.
17. Lisa Feltner, Arsenal Street – she stated that we are really missing a set of detailed drawings to work from. Wants to see more information above what they will do at the campus.
18. Joe Levendusky, Templeton Parkway – stated that the real obstacle here is the addition to the garage that most people don’t favor. Be careful about the riverfront and its legacy.

19. Elodia Thomas, Marion Road – stated that she wants to see scale in the drawings.
20. David Martin, North Beacon Street – concurred with Ms. Thomas.
21. Natalie Corbett, Boylston Street – she stated that she is hoping to have cut throughs to the river for those who want to walk.
22. Mike O’Keefe, Paul Street – growth in Watertown lacks direction and this project needs oversight and careful scrutiny.

The Chair re-opened comments to the council.

Vice President Corbett stated that the amendments before the Council tonight are for a master plan and not on approval of the location, size or height of the buildings.

Mr. Beal stated that if the amendments are adopted, they will then go back and develop a master plan based on everything they have heard tonight and what might be acceptable to the community and then have two meetings before anything is filed before the planning board.

Councilor Palomba asked if minor adjustments can be made to the proposal tonight. Attorney Riley indicated, yes.

Councilor Lenk stated that there is an opportunity here to continue the historic character of this amazing place and there is an opportunity to continue that in a new way; but that she would like to make sure in the amendments that are being proposed; that more clarity is put in place that would never allow a building off a parking garage or anything like that.

Councilor Woodland stated that he is happy with the proposals and will be supporting it noting the amount of community input and transparency that has been put into this.

Councilor Kounelis stated that though the proposal has come a long way since last August there is a need to tie up loose ends before this document is voted into place and she cannot support it as is.

Councilor Piccirilli stated that it is important to recognize the two major changes, height and set-backs and adding the procedure for creating a master plan. He stated that it is important to add the language for a master plan. Some concerns about the definitions of adjacency and clarifying sustainable practices for that extra fifteen feet and solar panels in the parking garages, but it is important to take the context of height and adding that in is important. The master plan is where you are going to have to put in a lot of effort, and tonight is just the step that allows you to do that he noted.

Councilor Falkoff stated that the red flags are just too high here. She stated that she feels that she cannot trust the team and that she is extremely concerned about the loss of open space. She indicated that she has been following what has been going on at the arsenal for decades and that parking has always been the issue. She stated that she does not want parking garages spread all over the place.

Councilor Dushku stated that there was a lot of things in the plans that he was ready to approve and noted that he is more and more comfortable with it than he was months ago; and asked that the end of the parking garage and the river – is there something we can do tonight to get around that.

The Chair stated that this is a plan that starts here and bring us down slowly to the complex; it is a plan that allows us to make a plan. He noted that back in August is was a bad plan; and we continued it and opened up a dialogue. The Chair indicated that the big thing that night in August was the garage – and tonight we are not talking about the garage. He stated that these people have shown that our community can work with them and that we should work with them because they listen. The Chair asked Mr. Magoon if he has language that can remedy the concerns expressed tonight.

Mr. Magoon stated that there are two issues that he heard most concerns about – height of new buildings as it relates the eastern end of campus and also proximity to north Beacon Street as it relates to that campus as well.

Under setbacks add: “East of Charles River Road, no building shall be permitted within 50 feet of North Beacon Street”.

Under Maximum Height add: “East of School Street two stories not to exceed 24 feet of elevation above the plain created by the roofs of adjacent existing buildings within the AODD, as of June, 2015 excluding the existing parking garage”.

Within the Same Section: A clarification was made to allow increased height as follows: “necessary features that promote sustainable practices may extend up to 15 feet above the roofs of buildings in access of the height limits noted above provided the portions exceeding the heights limits are not used for parking for other permitted uses in this section”.

Councilor Palomba and Dushku suggested amendments including that roof accessory equipment shall have inconsequential or minimal visual and auditory impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

Councilor Palomba suggested adding 3D views to the master plan process.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to accept all the amendments as proposed, seconded by Councilor Palomba and adopted by unanimous roll call vote with Councilors Aaron Dushku, Angeline B. Kounelis, Susan Falkoff, Cecilia Lenk, Anthony Palomba, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., Kenneth M. Woodland, Vice President Stephen P. Corbett and Council President Mark S. Sideris voting in the affirmative.

Councilor Palomba moved to accept the [Ordinance as amended](#), seconded by Councilor Lenk and adopted by a roll call vote with 7 for and 2 with Councilors Aaron Dushku, Cecilia Lenk, Anthony Palomba, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., Kenneth M. Woodland, Vice President Stephen P. Corbett and Council President Mark S. Sideris voting in the affirmative and Councilors Falkoff and Kounelis voting against.

3. ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Town Council, Councilor Woodland moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 pm, seconded by Councilor Lenk and adopted by unanimous voice vote with Councilors Aaron Dushku, Angeline B. Kounelis, Susan Falkoff, Cecilia Lenk, Anthony Palomba, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., Kenneth M. Woodland, Vice President Stephen P. Corbett and Council President Mark S. Sideris voting in the affirmative.

[Addendum](#)

I hereby certify that at a regular meeting of the Town Council for which a quorum was present, the above minutes were adopted by voice vote on June 23, 2015.

Mark S. Sideris, Council President